

Global Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy Framework

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental concerns and climate change have been on the international policy agenda since early 1970s, beginning with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972 and the first World Climate Conference (WCC) in 1979. The first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up in 1988 to review and assess scientific, technical and socio-economic data on climate change. The cumulative efforts over the years provided the much needed impetus to the issues raised in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1992. Popularly known as the “Earth Summit,” this was where the international community agreed upon the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The UNFCCC provided a legal framework that enabled negotiations over various climate agreements every year at the Conference of Parties (COP). The COP is the highest decision-making authority of the UNFCCC and is an important forum for all international climate events since 1995, when the first COP was held. The UNFCCC has a primary objective to stabilize GHG emissions to prevent human-induced climate change. Towards this, its most important contributions, inter-alia, have been the Kyoto Protocol which came in force in 2005, the Bali Action Plan in 2007 and the Paris Agreement of 2015.

Over the years, the UNFCCC recognized the vulnerability of developing countries to climate change and acknowledged that their right to sustainable development and economic growth depends on collective climate action. What was mainly a top-down approach, turned into a bottom-up process since the COP 13 in Bali (Indonesia). This apparent shift led to increased participation from civil society in the COP negotiations, especially women’s organizations, resulting in an increased emphasis on gender equality within the UNFCCC.

The UNFCCC, which had no gender equality mandate in its initial years, adopted its first text on gender equality and women’s participation, along with a mandate that National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) will be guided by gender equality, at the COP 7 in Marrakesh (Morocco). Nine years of additional efforts finally led to the acceptance

TRAINER'S TIP



For basic course, the content on international frameworks can be condensed with limited information sharing during the conclusion session of the Cross and Knots/Tic Tac Toe exercise. However, the participants will need to be given some more time, than what is suggested in the exercise, for them to go through Handout 7. Also, repeat the exercise at least twice for basis course.

of gender equality and women's participation as an element for effective action on all aspects of climate change at the COP 16 in Doha (Qatar). Since then, gender concerns have guided almost all actions of the UNFCCC and, as of mid-2015, the UNFCCC had over 50 mandates on gender equality (Aguilar, Granat and Owren 2015).

The COP now has a standing agenda on gender and climate change. The COP 18 in 2012 also embarked on the decision to maintain a gender balance and women’s participation in all COP and related events. The Paris Agreement, adopted by the COP to the UNFCCC in 2015, also noted in its preamble that “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity” (UNFCCC 2014). The parties to the Paris Agreement also acknowledged that adaptation, including capacity building for mitigation and adaptation action, should be gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems (UN Women 2016).

The landmark decision in terms of gender, however, came at the COP 20 in 2014, through the launch of the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG). The LWPG (2014) establishes a two-year work programme that includes (UNFCCC 2014):

1. A review of implementation of all gender-related mandates by the UNFCCC Secretariat;
2. Training and awareness raising for delegates on gender-responsive climate policy;
3. Training and capacity building for women delegates;
4. Two in-session workshops on gender (in relation to mitigation, technology, adaptation and capacity building) at Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) 42 and 44;

5. Submissions by Parties on these workshops;
6. A technical paper by the Secretariat on guidelines for implementing gender considerations in climate change activities; and
7. Appointment of a senior focal point on gender at the UNFCCC Secretariat.

As of January 2021, 83 parties, including the European Union, have nominated gender focal points as mandated by the LWPG (UNFCCC n.d.(a)).

At the COP 23 in 2017, the LWPG adopted the Gender Action Plan (GAP). At the COP 25 in 2019, the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and Gender Action Plan was adopted. This latest five-year GAP (UNFCCC 2019) was unanimously agreed to by governments who are called to lead or contribute to actions promoting gender equality in the UNFCCC process and supporting all activities. The latest GAP builds on the first GAP and addresses the emerging needs of scaling up gender-just climate solutions and greater implementation of action. It focused on: i) taking into account human rights in climate action; ii) being inclusive of the unique challenges experienced by indigenous people; and iii) promoting action in developing gender-responsive climate technology solutions and in preserving traditional knowledge.

The GAP sets out objectives and activities under five priority areas that aim to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action and its coherent mainstreaming in the implementation of the UNFCCC and the work of Parties, the Secretariat, United Nations entities and all stakeholders at all levels, as well as women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the UNFCCC process. These include:

1. Capacity building, knowledge management and communication.
2. Gender balance, participation and women's leadership.
3. Coherence and consistent implementation of gender-related mandates and activities.
4. Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation.
5. Monitoring and reporting.

Driving Factors and Strategies Leading to Engendering of the UNFCCC

It is important to understand and learn from the driving factors which contributed to gender mainstreaming within the UNFCCC. Some of the key contributing factors included:

1. Growing influence of the evolving human rights and sustainable development framework over the same period;

2. Increased understanding of the need for gender equality as an integral part of a sustainable and efficient development model;
3. Collective and concerted efforts of gender champions including UN agencies, civil society groups, academics and researchers including leading networks like Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), GenderCC, LIFE e.V., etc.; and
4. Mounting research and evidence on the interlinkages between gender and climate change.

It is also important to highlight here the role of institutional mechanisms strategically influencing the processes. These include:

1. **The Women Delegates Fund (WDF):** Recognizing a need to support women's equitable participation and leadership in the UN climate negotiations, particularly from countries most affected by climate change, the Government of Finland partnered with the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) under the auspices of the GGCA to launch the WDF in 2009. The WDF works to enhance women's participation on national delegation to the climate negotiations by providing travel support especially to delegates from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and by building leadership skills through knowledge and capacity building technical issues related to the negotiations, media and communications (Aguilar, Granat and Owren 2015).
2. **The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC):** While women's organizations have been active in the UNFCCC since its beginning, the initial 15 years of engagement was more informal. In 2008, active women's CSOs applied for provisional constituency status to gain official recognition and be afforded formal channels through which to provide input into negotiating processes. A provisional status was granted in 2009 for the WGC. The WGC became fully operational in 2015 and is able to make submissions and interventions on the floor, as well as participate in a range of in-session workshops and other events. It also collaborates closely with other major constituencies, including youth, indigenous peoples, trade unions and environmental non-government organizations (NGOs) (Aguilar, Granat and Owren 2015).

3. Momentum for Change – Women for Results (W4R):

In 2012, the UNFCCC Secretariat itself, with support from Rockefeller Foundation, launched an initiative “Momentum for Change” that recognizes innovative and transformative solutions that address both climate change and wider economic, social and environmental challenges (Myers 2016). Called Lighthouse Activities, the projects that are chosen as winners of this prestigious competition fall into specific categories, including one called Women for Results. The winners get an opportunity to participate and showcase their work at the next COP. They also get access to policymakers and potential funders during the conference; public recognition by the UN Climate Change Secretariat; public relations support and media training; marketing materials, including promotional videos; a dedicated page about their project on the UNFCCC website; and professional photography.

SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a ten-year plan for disaster risk reduction, was developed at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Kobe (Japan) for building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the successor instrument to the HFA, was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai (Japan) in 2015. The key features of the Sendai Framework include: i) strong emphasis on disaster risk management as opposed to disaster management; ii) focus on prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation as part of disaster risk management; iii) the recognition of climate change as exacerbating disasters and also as a driver of disaster risk; and iv) calling for the coherence of DRR, sustainable development, climate change and other policies for improving efficacy and efficiency. The Sendai Framework (UNISDR 2015)¹ also has an explicit outcome, goal, four priorities and seven global targets outlined in the following sections:

Outcome: Substantial reduction of disaster risks and losses in lives, livelihoods and health.

Goal: Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience.

Priorities:

1. Building policies and practices on understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment.
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels for an effective and efficient management of disaster risk. With clear vision, plans, competence, guidance and coordination within and across sectors, as well as participation of relevant stakeholders, are needed.
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment.
4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Empowering women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches is important.

Global Targets:

1. Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;
2. Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;
3. Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030;
4. Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030;
5. Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020;
6. Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of the present Framework by 2030; and
7. Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030.

1. On 1 May 2019, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction officially changed its acronym to UNDRR (from UNISDR).

The HFA had a goal to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015, and had a clear mandate that “a gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training.”

The Sendai Framework expands its gender discourse when it:

- > Recognizes gender considerations as a priority for enhanced disaster preparedness – “Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted. In this context, special attention should be paid to the improvement of organized voluntary work of citizens.”
- > Recognizes role of women as key stakeholder – “Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations.”

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) has been tasked to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework. Towards this, the UNDRR launched the Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments (SFVC) online platform in 2018 with an aim to mobilize, monitor and take stock of commitments from a diverse range of stakeholders for the implementation of the framework. In 2019, UNDRR published the first report on SFVC which synthesized and analyzed voluntary commitments published to date. The report highlighted the gaps in implementation of the gender mandate. There are only six voluntary commitments; with gender in only 3 per cent of themes covered in voluntary commitments. As the report states, “Increased focus is needed on Priority for Action 3, Targets D and F, themes such as children & youth, gender, and science & technology along with hazards that are relevant to the context where Voluntary Commitments are being implemented.” (UNDRR 2019a).

National Frameworks for CCDRR and Gender Mainstreaming

Different mechanisms and programmes defined under the UNFCCC have given countries opportunities to identify climate change needs, priorities, strategies and actions in various ways. The most critical among them have been the National Communications, the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This section provides a brief overview of the two planning-related mechanisms, NAPAs and NAPs.

NATIONAL ADAPTATION PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

The Marrakesh COP 2001 had established the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) work programme, with a purpose of providing support to them for addressing their vulnerabilities. This included the NAPAs, which provide a process for the LDCs to identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs on adapting to climate change wherein delays in meeting those need could significantly increase the vulnerability or lead to higher costs at a later stage (UNFCCC n.d. (b)). The key features of NAPAs include:

1. Identification of specific climate-related vulnerabilities, and immediate and urgent adaptation needs of the LDCs;
2. A multidisciplinary approach that build on existing plans and programmes with the aim to mainstreaming NAPAs into development planning;
3. Not research-based, with stress on participatory processes. NAPAs build on existing information with community input as an important source;
4. Contain a list of ranked priority adaptation activities and projects, with short profiles of each to assist in the development of proposals for implementation;
5. Action-oriented, country-driven, flexible and based on national circumstances; and
6. Presented in a simple format, easily understood both by policy-level decision-makers and the public.

Once a NAPA is submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat, the LDC Party is eligible to access funding under the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), which is managed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), for the implementation of the NAPA. As of December 2017, 51 countries had completed and submitted their NAPAs to the UNFCCC Secretariat (UNFCCC 2017).